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Seventy-second session

Official Records

21st plenary meeting
Saturday, 23 September 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Tevi (Vanuatu), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Osman Mohammed Saleh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea.

Mr. Saleh (Eritrea): It is another year and another session of the General Assembly. We meet in the same Assembly Hall and deliver our addresses from the same rostrum, yet no modicum of protocol can mask the gaping divide in our ranks. We live in an increasingly fragile, unjust and unequal world. A small minority holds the reins of power and wealth among nations and, for the most part, within nations. The overwhelming majority of nations and their citizens are without power, without voice, without the means for a decent life, and often without peace and security. We may be called the United Nations, but the reality is that we are divided nations and societies.

Despite our deep divisions, however, our destinies are intertwined in a fundamental way. We share a common home: a small planet in a vast universe, a tiny boat in a vast ocean. Whatever calamity happens anywhere in our world — epidemics, poverty, violence, mass displacement, war, terror — it will eventually catch up with all of us.

We share the responsibility to address the fundamental problems of our common world. Certainly, the mighty and wealthy should shoulder bigger responsibility, as they command vast power and resources. It is only fair that more is asked of those to whom much has been given — or, more accurately, those who have appropriated much for themselves. We should unflaggingly remind them of their obligations and press them not for charity, but for enlightened self-interest that understands that might is not permanent and that only shared benefits are sustainable.

We would, however, be gravely mistaken and would have forgotten the lessons of history if we pinned all our hopes on the goodwill of those who currently enjoy disproportionate power, wealth and influence. Power does not readily concede its privileges of its own accord. It resorts to deception, coercion, pressure, sanctions, violence and war to maintain and, if possible, increase its privileges.

The developing countries and the marginalized peoples of the globe stand to gain most from a more peaceful, secure, just and equal world. They owe it to themselves and to coming generations to build solidarity and to steadfastly strive and work and innovate for a better world. It is their duty to ensure freedom, dignity and prosperity for their peoples.

Africa remains the most marginalized of all continents. Undoubtedly, there is some progress, more in some countries than in others. But talk of an African Renaissance, of fastest-growing economies, is misplaced and premature. We should not flatter

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ourselves or allow others to flatter us. Africa remains a producer and small-bit exporter of primary products. It retains minimum revenue from those exports, with foreign companies getting the lion's share. Processing of primary products, value addition, industrialization and technology development barely exist. African economies, physical and social infrastructure, institutional and governance structures, and peace and security architectures remain undeveloped.

Yet Africa boasts tremendous human and natural resources. Indeed, over 60 per cent of global natural resources lie in Africa. It is only when Africa's economies, the quality of its infrastructure, the standards of its health and educational institutions, the level of its artistic, scientific and technological products, the effectiveness of its institutions and enterprises and, more importantly, the quality of life of its citizens reflect more accurately its great potential that we can rightly speak of Africa taking its rightful place in the world. We should safeguard independence and sovereignty, fight ethnic polarization and rampant corruption, chart our own paths, develop bold and imaginative policies that suit our conditions, rely mainly on our own resources and build an Africa that meets the aspirations of its people and makes valuable contributions to humankind.

Eritrea is a young, strategically located nation with significant human and natural resources. It joined the community of independent nations a quarter of a century ago by dint of its people's 30-year struggle for freedom and self-determination, fought and won against tremendous odds. As an independent nation, it has faced the full brunt of an unfair and unjust international order. It has faced demonization, ostracism, sanctions and armed aggression, and that sustained external hostility caused much harm to Eritrea and its people. It slowed down Eritrea's progress, but it was not able to stop it. It could not shake the resolve of the Eritrean people and their Government. Eritrea was severely tested but emerged intact, more determined, more experienced and in many ways stronger. It is peaceful, stable, secure and harmonious: a haven of stability in a turbulent neighbourhood.

Eritrea is, quietly and without fanfare, engaged in comprehensive nation-building. It is pursuing policies and taking concrete measures to strengthen the unity and harmony of its people, fostering their political participation and unleashing their energies and talents. It is laying the groundwork for broad-based and sustainable economic development. It is putting modern infrastructure in place, step by step. It is working to ensure that all its citizens get good access to nutritious food, clean water, electricity, shelter, transport, communications, health care and educational services, as well as cultural, sports and recreational facilities.

Eritrea has also embarked on a massive water and soil conservation programme and an afforestation programme as part of its comprehensive plan to enhance the environment and fight climate change. Eritrea is confident that it will meet the Sustainable Development Goals ahead of time. In its ambitious development programme, Eritrea avoids dependency and relies first and foremost on its people and on its domestic resources. At the same time, it welcomes and encourages cooperation and partnership, with a focus on trade and investment. Eritrea also seeks to make a modest contribution to peace, stability and cooperation in its wider region, which includes the Nile basin, the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea basin and the Gulf. It has successfully fought and continues to fight radicalization, extremism and terrorism both on its own and in cooperation with its neighbours.

Eritrea extends its hands of friendship and solidarity to all peoples and nations who strive to build their countries and contribute to a fairer, more just and more equal world. Eritrea takes the initiative to engage with all countries, including those who differ with it. Eritrea strongly believes that its political, economic, social and diplomatic path would be smoother and easier if the external obstacles that have been on its path were removed. It therefore once again calls on the Security Council to lift the unfair and unjust sanctions imposed on it for the past nine years. There is no justification for them to continue, and they do not serve any useful purpose.

Another obstacle facing Eritrea — indeed, facing the whole Horn of Africa region — is the 15-year-old occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory by Ethiopia. Eritrea calls on the Security Council to ensure the end of that flagrant violation of international law and several United Nations resolutions.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Yldiz Pollack-Beighle, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

Ms. Pollack-Beighle (Suriname): On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse, President of the Republic of Suriname, I wish to extend our

congratulations to Mr. Lajčák on his election to preside over the General Assembly. Suriname is grateful to the former President, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his efforts in addressing the issues of small and vulnerable States within the small island developing States construct, and we wish him success in his new role as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Oceans.

Allow me to address critical issues related to the theme of this year's session that are directly related to Suriname and the region we belong to.

Suriname cannot but give special attention to the extraordinary fashion in which the annual hurricane season has presented itself in the Caribbean. Our thoughts go out to the many families, mothers and children, the elderly and the sick who are living the worst possible nightmare. We are convinced that those affected will be comforted by the hope that all is not lost, since the world community stands with them and prays for the betterment and speedy recovery of our region. We also acknowledge the suffering in Mexico as a result of the recent heavy earthquakes and express our deep sympathy for its victims.

Those events confront us with the relativity of human power and State power, whether unilateral or multilateral. A quick review of the damage caused by the recent natural disasters shows the destruction of the means of production and physical infrastructure. That has created social disruption that goes far beyond the immediate needs of the victimized societies. We also observe that the world at large demonstrates a strong sense of solidarity when calamity strikes and humanitarian assistance is urgently needed. However, to alleviate the desperate condition of the peoples, we must, in our international efforts, address the calamities from a deeper and wider perspective.

We must assist the respective Governments in restructuring socioeconomic and physical infrastructure in such a way that those States can become more resilient and reduce their vulnerability in future. That will require the development of innovative concepts and intensive sharing of global experiences. Combining forces on the global scale has become crucial. Furthermore, it will imply aggressive mobilization of adequate resources.

Such necessary resource mobilization will face obstacles. We will have to confront the fact that a number of the more affluent nations entertain inward-looking policies that do not augur well regarding the pressing need to join hands in solving such truly global problems. Recent weeks have made it very clear to all of us that the forces of nature do not discriminate. Suriname strongly supports the view that nations should proportionately contribute at a global level if we want to survive as humankind.

When scientists indicate precise and foreseeable natural disasters, it is obvious that we should take precautionary measures, mitigate possible dangers and adapt existing structures to minimize the effect. Becoming more resilient remains the only way. In that connection, it is unacceptable that Caribbean countries, including Suriname, are being graduated to middle-income countries, with zero option to obtain concessional loans.

Today, I, too lament the fact that the vulnerability of those countries should be taken into account when classifications are applied. Thus, it is ironic that Suriname is facing such threats of climate change, while at the same time we are making tremendous contributions to mitigate climate change. As a high-forested, low-deforestation country with 90 per cent forest cover — the highest in the world — Suriname provides regulation services to the global climate, including as a carbon sink.

In addition to providing livelihoods to indigenous and tribal communities, our forests are biodiversity hotspots with an impressive number of endemic and internationally significant species. Our forests also support freshwater regulation as part of the unique Amazon ecosystem and provide employment and income generation through an active forest industry. Above all, we have set aside for conservation purposes 1.6 million hectares of pristine rainforest, referred to as the Central Suriname Nature Reserve, as a gift to humankind.

While Suriname's greenhouse-gas emissions have historically been negative, it is a challenge to enhance the country's economic development while maintaining that unique position in the world. To achieve that goal, Suriname is ready to partner with Governments, the global community and other stakeholders to transform our economy into one in which environmental protection — including through the REDD+ programme for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries — social advancement and economic prosperity take central stage. Our multi-annual development plan, recently

adopted by Parliament, is testimony to that vision for our nation's sustainable development.

On the issues of non-interference and non-intervention, I draw the Assembly's attention to the following. The natural disasters I just referred to coincide with growing political conflicts, and that may well lead to a serious loss of human lives and the destruction of human achievements. A number of those conflicts are related to a stark disrespect for the basic principles that have been enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations since 1945.

Non-interference in the affairs of sovereign States and non-intervention are not empty principles. They are based on a firm belief that all peoples are equal and that the prevailing structures of government and democracy cannot be prescribed externally. Recent interventions in the Middle East have not created better societies. On the contrary, we have witnessed divided, warring factions that can hardly be qualified as an improvement to the Governments that were ousted.

Suriname also has experienced the ill effects of interference in internal affairs. The destruction of infrastructure and means of production amounted to approximately $300 million, and much worse than that is the fact that hundreds of children were deprived of access to education and proper health care. Today as a nation we are still suffering from the results of the so-called foreign-supported internal strife that disrupted societies in the interior that were characterized by a socioeconomic order that had lasted for more than 300 years.

Suriname knows what interference means, and the only way we have dealt with it is by insisting on dialogue, which resulted in the signing of the peace treaty in May 1992. So when we tell the world that non-interference and non-intervention are principles to adhere to at all costs, we are speaking from our own experience. For almost three decades, Suriname's commitment to peace and development through the promotion of dialogue and the implementation of broad-based social programmes remained in full accordance with the principles and guidelines of the United Nations. Dialogue in the spirit of mutual respect has led to peace and prosperity.

In that same vein, in 2012 the legislature passed an amendment to the amnesty law of 1992 that applied amnesty for the full period of political violence in Suriname, from 1980 to 1992. In doing so, the legislature complied with article 8 of the Constitution, which bans discrimination and guarantees equal rights to all citizens. That amendment further provided for the truth and reconciliation commission, allowing for a clear distinction between politically motivated violence and criminal acts.

Allow me to inform this gathering that Suriname's path to peace and sustainable development enjoyed full acceptance in 2015, when a greater majority elected the incumbent Government. Moreover, civil society has taken up the responsibility to advance the peace process through the implementation of initiatives that contribute to the cause of truth-finding and reconciliation.

Against the backdrop of those developments, Suriname took note with concern of the unverified and biased comments published by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers. Therefore, Suriname categorically rejects the assertions of that special procedures mandate-holder, who did not provide the Government an opportunity to respond in a timely manner.

The seventy-first session of the General Assembly marked a milestone in the way the world views the five-decades-old unilateral economic, commercial and financial boycott against Cuba. Last year, not one State voted against resolution 71/5, on definitively ending that unilateral decision, which has proved to be unproductive from all angles. However, the current reality obliges us to continue expressing our deepest concern, since we learned about the continuation of that detrimental and unilateral policy. Suriname therefore, with absolute respect for the sovereignty of each nation to determine its own policies, urges that constructive dialogue and cooperation must prevail and that bridges must be built on the basis of equality and respect for independence and sovereignty.

Suriname rejects any measure that might strengthen the blockade, which is in violation of international law, the sovereignty of States, the principles of non-intervention in internal affairs and self-determination. My Government reiterates the critical importance of those principles and underscores the relevance of the processes of dialogue, diplomacy, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and political and economic cooperation as building blocks for stability, peace and democracy in the Americas.

In that line of thought, we encourage the Member States in general, and especially the South American and Caribbean States, to deal in a constructive manner

with the problems of our sister nation, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Let us continue to stress the need for dialogue between all parties. History proves that interference and intervention are never successful.

Suriname is deeply concerned about the current developments on the Korean peninsula. In whatever configuration for a sustainable solution, we believe that the interests of the Korean people must remain paramount. First and foremost, the Korean people must be given guarantees that violence, whether it originates in North Korea or elsewhere, can never be a solution to the problem. Dialogue and negotiations will be the only remaining road to a sustainable solution for the dignity and well-being of the Korean people in their struggle for peace and development. The example of South America and the Caribbean in remaining a nuclear-weapon-free zone could well serve as a model to be followed. The absence of nuclear weapons creates an environment conducive to dialogue and meaningful negotiations.

The global village is becoming ever more interdependent. Different cultures and ethnic orientations are rapidly becoming the basis for racial and global conflicts. Therefore, we have to find new paradigms to effectively limit dogmatic adherence to religious and social concepts. Tolerance and mutual respect have become a must if we want to guarantee peace and sustainability for future generations.

The Government of Suriname is following, not only with keen interest but also a certain degree of concern, the recent re-emergence in many parts of the world of right-wing extremism framed as populism. That development has the potential to put severe pressure on social cohesion within countries and bilateral relations between nations, thereby affecting opportunities and the potential for cooperation.

Suriname has worked tirelessly to achieve national unity, which has resulted in a very diverse and well-integrated society where tolerance forms one of the basic principles that underpins its very existence. Thanks to the type of nation we have built, very disturbing and destabilizing factors such as right-wing extremism and ethnic and religious intolerance can neither have nor find a place in our nation, nor will they ever be able to take root and grow. Today, Suriname enjoys an exceptional era of tolerance and mutual respect, with Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and other religious denominations living in an atmosphere of peace and mutual respect. With roots from all continents of the world and through intensive dialogue and mutual respect, Suriname has become a shining example of the importance of not entertaining supremacist concepts.

Therefore, the Government of Suriname is considered best positioned to understand and analyse the current global trend, which needs to be reversed with immediate effect. Suriname stands ready to share its experience and best practices with other sister nations on the issue of nation-building based on diversity, pluralism, integration and peace. I am convinced that others will then be able to better understand one of the important mottos of Suriname — diversity is power.

My Government strongly believes that focusing on people is the quintessence of the application of power. Suriname is an example in kind. As a nation, we have recently faced the ill effects of a largely commodity-based export economy. The sharp downturn in oil and gold prices in recent years, combined with the unfortunate closure of the century-old bauxite and alumina complex, has challenged Suriname's macroeconomic management since mid-2015.

By any international standards, Suriname faced a severe shock that was compounded on the balance-of-payments side by the sharp increase in imports related to two major investment projects in oil and gold mining, which together accounted for about 35 per cent of annual gross domestic product. We estimate that the economy contracted severely, by more than 10 per cent, in 2016, requiring unprecedented fiscal and monetary policy adjustments, and some temporary balance-of-payments support.

In order to stabilize the exchange rate, reduce domestic demand and re-establish a viable balance of payments position, the monetary authorities sharply curtailed credit creation in the country, with credit to the private sector contracting in nominal terms. Since October 2016, the exchange rate has stabilized, monthly inflation rates have fallen to less than 1 per cent and the country has returned to a current account surplus position. Our macroeconomic response to the external and fiscal pressures started in earnest in August 2015 with a massive contraction in Government expenditure and increases in taxation.

The Government acknowledges that the extractive sector producing gold, fossil fuels and other marketable minerals will remain critical for our economic development in the foreseeable future. We accept that reality, being fully aware that the wealth created must

be deployed in financing a well-planned initiative to expand our economy in a sustainable manner. With that objective in mind, the Government has recently adopted very important legislative measures. One deals with the establishment of a sovereign wealth and stabilization fund, and the other introduces the institutional framework which will facilitate foreign direct investments. As outlined in our multi-annual development plan, Suriname intends to strike a balance between the export of commodities and the export of final products in sync with the services industry.

Suriname acknowledges its citizens as the most important resource for its development. In spite of the challenging budgetary constraints, the socioeconomic policies of the Government remained people-oriented. The continued application of the basic health-care law provides for proper health care for our entire population. In addition, as announced by President Bouterse and as part of the social contract, adequate housing, access to education, youth participation, engagement and sports development, job creation and care for persons with disabilities and the elderly have remained priorities for sustainable development and growth.

The message delivered by Secretary-General António Guterres assured us all of his commitment to the theme of the Assembly's seventy-second session. Suriname pledges its full support and cooperation.

The implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in sync with the necessary reform of the United Nations, will carry a lot of weight. That will be a formidable challenge, and therefore my Government believes that in addition to the mobilization domestic resources, consideration must be given to accessible financing, from a wide array of financial mechanisms, for development, capacity-building, innovation and the transfer of technology for developing countries.

Having addressed those matters of vital importance for the survival of humankind, on the basis of the principles of the United Nations, we bring to mind the Amerindian saying that we have not inherited the Earth, but that we have the Earth on loan from future generations. It is up to us to give that wise saying its substance.

In the final analysis, I wish to underscore and reiterate the utmost importance of youth involvement and participation at the highest levels. My Government has made it a priority to create the conditions for youth to be part of decision-making processes. I refer to young people, among others, as innovators, members of parliament and cabinet and as chief executive officers within what we refer to as the youth-adult partnership. In 2010, our Government established a special ministry responsible for youth and sport development. It gives me pleasure to announce that this year youth representatives are part of my official delegation to this seventy-second session. Furthermore, it is through political will that more women in our society can accede to the highest echelons of political decision-making.

The 2030 Agenda envisages a world that guarantees all inhabitants of our planet a climate conducive to self-development, a climate of respect for human dignity and of tolerance towards other cultures, with the ultimate goal of giving our planet the gift of diversity based on mutual respect.

It is up to each one of us, regardless of our status in society; it is up to each nation, whether big or small; it is up to this multilateral Organization to focus on people and strive for peace and a decent live for all on a sustainable planet. We owe it to ourselves; yes, we owe it to this and coming generations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Ahmed Abd al-Aziz Ghandour, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the the Republic of the Sudan.

Mr. Ghandour (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of the Sudan to wish us all success at this year's General Assembly session. I express my heartfelt congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its current session, His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák, and wish him success in his endeavours. In addition, I would like to express my appreciation of the wisdom and efficiency of his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, who steered the work of the seventy-first session.

The theme of the seventy-second session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — reflects the importance the United Nations attaches to the implementation of its pillars: peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights. It also proves that the United Nations is committed to anchoring the concept of peace, prosperity and good livelihood for everyone. Those are the hopes and ambitions that we all that seek in order to achieve sustainable development, fight poverty in all this forms and achieve prosperity for future generations.

The Sudan looks forward to playing an effective role in the United Nations, alongside the rest of the international community, in order to achieve the necessary reform, respond to Africa's needs regarding reform of the security Council, promote the development role of the United Nations, implement the internationally agreed Agenda for Sustainable Development and fight against the politicization of justice.

As part of the national dialogue initiative led by our President, Mr. Omar Hassan Al-Bashir, in 2014 a Government of National Unity was established with the broad participation of various political components and previously armed groups to promote peace and security in the country. The implementation of the exit strategy for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2363 (2017), proves that the Sudan has turned the page on conflict and has embarked on a new era of peace and stability. We would like to express our thanks and appreciation for the support of the United Nations, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and brotherly and friendly countries.

We hope to receive the support of peace and development funds, especially the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, as well as from the World Bank and its mechanisms, so that we can implement the Government's approach, which promotes peace and implements the outcomes of the national dialogue. That approach will also urge the remaining armed groups to join the quest for peace. That is why our President adopted resolution 479 on 1 July, expanding the ceasefire everywhere until the end of October, even though some of those rebel groups pursue their irresponsible practices, destabilizing Darfur as they carry out desperate military actions in May. Attempted attacks by those groups in Libya and the Republic of South Sudan were futile and failed.

We express our deep concern vis-à-vis the lack of strict action by relevant United Nations entities and the international community against the rebel groups that have been working as mercenaries in Libya and South Sudan. That only tempts them to refuse any engagement in the peace process and comes at the time when the Government of the Sudan is waiting for those groups to implement the peace road map agreement sponsored by the African Union and supported by the international community.

With regard to the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations and the Security Council, we have welcomed the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) three times in the past. The Panel visited all states of Darfur, and its reports commended the cooperation of my Government and emphasized that Darfur has recovered stability and security. That is why we stress the importance of adopting the recommendation of the Committee Chair to review the sanctions of resolution 1591 (2005), so as to support peace in Darfur and the region.

The Sudan has always defended the principles of justice and international cooperation. We have sought to implement them, especially the principle of fighting impunity. However, the politicization of international justice, as is the case with the International Criminal Court, has jeopardized its political weight. It has disappointed the international community, especially the African community, which had great hopes that that Criminal Court would anchor the principles of international criminal justice.

Sudan's position vis-à-vis the Court, which is expressed in the position of the African Union in its summit decisions, stresses that the International Criminal Court is an organ that manipulates the law for political objectives to be imposed against the will of people, especially African people. The Court, therefore, cannot serve the purpose of justice. For that reason the Sudan calls for heeding the African voice. We call upon the States of the world to anchor the principles of justice without allowing international justice to become a political tool used by some. We also warn against the use of the United Nations in the name of international justice, on the basis of the cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, in a way that tarnishes the reputation of the United Nations and involves it in international political conflicts. We will continue to fight any attempt to involve the Court in the United Nations system, and we call upon all lovers of justice in the world to follow suit.

My Government has spared no effort to fight human trafficking, illicit migration, electronic crime and drug trafficking to ensure sustainable comfort and stability at the international, regional and national levels. That comes from the fact that the Sudan enjoys a geographic position in the middle of the African continent, linking it to the rest of the continent and to the Middle East.

Those efforts include effective and active involvement in the European Union-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative — the Khartoum Process — to address the causes and repercussions of illicit migration in the Horn of Africa, in addition to other cooperation frameworks.

As for refugees, the Sudan hosts some 3 million from neighbouring countries, and other countries as well. We have provided great assistance to those refugees, meeting more than 80 per cent of their needs at a time when the international community meets only 20 per cent of that need. We do that even though half of the refugees live outside of camps, which places pressure on the services we provide to our citizens because of difficult economic circumstances.

I would like to note the recent visit of Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to the Sudan in mid-August, where he met the President of the Republic and many other officials, including myself. He addressed the situation of the refugees in the Sudan and expressed great appreciation for the role the Sudan has been playing on behalf of the international community in providing care for the refugees. He also commended the Sudan for opening its borders at a time when other countries are closing theirs. He called upon the international community to provide further support to the Sudan as it shoulders its responsibility vis-à-vis refugees, and he called for supporting host countries and State institutions caring for the refugees. That is something the Sudan values, and we look forward to hearing the deliberations in the General Assembly around that issue.

The Sudan has received a daily influx of refugees, especially from South Sudan, almost 2,000 persons a day at some checkpoints. In connection with the special relations between the Sudan and South Sudan and the shared connections between the two peoples and countries, my delegation stresses its full commitment to efforts with international and regional partners, especially the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union, to achieve peace and stability in South Sudan. We will also continue our great efforts to address the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict in South Sudan. My delegation renews its commitment to the full implementation of the agreements signed with South Sudan on 27 September 2012 and all agreements signed between the two countries to build a bright future for the two brotherly peoples.

The Sudan stresses our principled position to fight the use of terrorism in all its forms, including violent extremism, as a means to achieve political objectives. We are committed to all international and regional agreements and conventions that we have ratified, and we have always been an active party at the international, regional and bilateral levels. The contributions of the Sudan have had a great positive impact in fighting that phenomenon and preventing further terrorist attacks through information-sharing and the good relations our institutions have with our international and regional counterparts.

At the national level, in March 2016 we announced our first special field study on the causes of terrorism and the means of fighting it in the Sudan, in cooperation with the United Nations. The study was commended by the many countries that attended and took part in the announcement of the study. We continue our efforts in cooperation with the relevant United Nations organs to ensure that the Sudanese strategy is coherent with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The Sudan was able to fulfil all of its technical commitments in order to obtain foreign debt forgiveness after the separation of South Sudan, through the work of the Tripartite Committee for the Joint Approach to the International Community on Economic Relief, composed of the Sudan, South Sudan and the high-level African mechanism, on the basis of the zero option on apportionment debt, which was extended recently until October 2018. We have also adopted a road map to engage with debtors and the international community after fulfilling all technical conditions to obtain forgiveness in line with the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. However, that has yet to be achieved.

Foreign debt is a great hurdle and a genuine burden for heavily indebted poor countries, thwarting their stability and sustainable development. Debt affects and negatively impacts their relations with the international and regional financing institutions and foreign investments. Therefore we stress the need for forgiveness in line with the Initiative.

The Sudan has been making great efforts to provide fresh drinking water through the President's Zero Thirst programme. We believe in the importance of water. Therefore, we have made great efforts and taken many initiatives to promote cooperation among the Nile basin countries. We hope that those efforts

succeed in achieving sustainable development. To stress the pioneering role of the Sudan in addressing issues of regional development and the environment, in the upcoming months we will host the African Great Green Wall Summit. The Great Green Wall is one of the greatest regional environmental cooperation projects. It stretches from Dakar in the west to Djibouti in the east, to achieve environmental balance in the African desert and to reduce the impact of climate change. Africa will be the main victim of climate change if this is not averted.

The Sudan stresses its firm position with regard to preserving the nuclear non-proliferation regime and destroying all weapons of mass destruction. That is the only guarantee to prevent the use of those weapons and the only way to anchor peace, stability and security in the world. In that connection, we renew our full commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We call upon all countries that have not yet signed the Treaty to do so without any delay.

We renew our firm position with respect to the Palestinian question. We condemn all forms of aggression against religious shrines in Palestine, especially against the holy Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The only way forward towards peace in the Middle East is through the implementation of resolutions of international legitimacy and the two-State solution, returning to the borders of 4 June 1967, in line with the Arab Peace Initiative.

We renew our firm position in support of constitutional legitimacy in Yemen. We call upon all political stakeholders to engage in the political process, reject fighting and violence and return to legitimacy.

My delegation stresses the need to preserve territorial integrity in Syria. We support all efforts to overcome the crisis in that country and highlight the importance of a political solution and the need to respect the will of this great people.

Once again, we emphasize the need to ensure stability in brotherly Somalia. We call for the provision of all forms of support to the Government and the people of that country so as to enable them to overcome their challenges and build legitimate institutions.

With regard to the situation in Libya, our position has never changed. We continue to work with the international community to ensure the success of all initiatives for security and stability, especially the Skhirat Agreement, which is the cornerstone of a political solution in brotherly Libya. We stress our full respect for the security, freedom and integrity of Libya as well as the prosperity of its people.

My delegation stresses the importance of achieving stability and sustainable development on the African continent and addressing the economic and security challenges that thwart its development, particularly the situations in the Lake Chad Basin, the Great Lakes region and Mali. In this regard, we call upon the international community to support regional initiatives to overcome these challenges, such as the Force conjointe du G5 Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin region initiatives. We also call for the promotion of the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in order to achieve peace and stability and implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conclusion, we renew our commitment to multilateralism under the leadership of the United Nations with a view to promoting the two most noble of purposes under the Charter of the United Nations: maintaining international peace and security and promoting the prosperity of all people. We stand in full solidarity with the Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres, and support his reform agenda.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. John M. Silk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Silk (Marshall Islands): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, I have the honour to convey warm greetings to the General Assembly. I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I am proud that his predecessor from the Pacific, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, will continue his service to the United Nations as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Ocean.

I also extend the condolences of my Government for the destruction and tragic loss resulting from the recent disasters in Mexico, the United States, Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Haiti, the Bahamas, Dominica and the territories of the United States and British Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, St. Barthélemy, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos and other islands.

The United Nations stands strong as the only place that all of us in the world have to confront our darkest

challenges together. Even if the present moment appears uncertain, we must all remain confident and committed to ensuring that the Organization will speak for those who might not otherwise have their voices heard.

Recent events with regard to North Korea and its growing nuclear threat must serve as a clear mandate for strong, urgent global cooperation and effective action. The Marshall Islands is a small island nation in the Pacific, and we wish only peace, security and stability for the world. We cannot ignore this sudden and obvious threat to the territory of Guam, our closest neighbour, friend and home to some of our citizens. The threat posed to Guam is a threat to the wider Pacific Islands region, and we express our concern about the challenges these actions have posed to peace, security and cooperation across the wider Pacific Rim.

The highest levels of the Government of the Marshall Islands vociferously condemn the nuclear test of 3 September and related actions. There is no need for debate: these actions are clear violations of Security Council resolutions and seriously challenge the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime based on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I am appalled that the Marshall Islands, of all countries, is again facing the very real threat of an atmospheric nuclear test over the Pacific Ocean.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands condemns these test efforts not just for its own security, but because we know the impacts first-hand. The 67 nuclear tests conducted in my country between 1946 and 1958 have produced a burdensome legacy that we hope no other nation or people will ever have to bear. These tests were conducted when my country was under the tutelage of the United Nations Trusteeship Council, which was charged with our welfare and well-being. When the Marshallese leaders travelled to New York to present two petitions to urgently halt nuclear tests in 1954 and 1956, the United Nations responded with Trusteeship Council resolutions 1082 (XIV) and 1493 (XVII), which are the only times any United Nations organ has ever specifically authorized nuclear tests. The consequences of this ignorance were — and are — beyond horrific.

Our people and environment have suffered as no other people should. The impacts of this legacy today remain stark and present challenges, passed from one generation to the next: from mother to daughter, father to son. This is why, in 2012, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and waste outlined the clear human rights implications and responsibilities which we affirm. I thank the Secretary-General for his statement to the Chair of the Pacific Island Forum on 14 August 2016, in which he said that

> "finding a solution to this issue is critical for the future of the Republic of the Marshall Islands",

assuring us that relevant United Nations entities stand ready to respond to requests for assistance.

Recent events should be creating far greater political resolve to curb and ultimately eliminate global nuclear threats. In this regard, the Republic of the Marshall Islands supports those nations that are now able to accede to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in so doing, and we will continue to add our own voice in all forums, including in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the Review and Extension Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

We are committed to a closed and inclusive examination of our own participation in the Nuclear-Ban Treaty by listening closely to our stakeholders and affected citizens, taking into account any possible implications for our common security relations. It will always remain our fervent hope that such weapons of mass destruction shall never again be tested or unleashed upon the world and that all nuclear-armed nations will find the necessary political will to disarm.

Earlier this year, my country experienced the tragic loss of our one-time Minister and climate ambassador, Mr. Tony de Brum, and I wish to express my gratitude to those who have conveyed their condolences. Ambassador de Brum once said that for the Marshall Islands,

> "[w]e are suffering the result of climate change and of the nuclear legacy and we have had nothing to do with either... In either case, people have to choose to end this world, this universe. You can either do it slowly with climate change, or you can press a button and blow it up. And neither is justified".

Just across from the United Nations, in the East River, there sits Belmont Island. It is a small, raggedy little outcrop only 1 metre tall. This island in New York must now serve as a reminder for the world's diplomats

that if they ever see it vanish beneath the rising sea, then they must also know that they have lost the Marshall Islands in the Pacific.

Climate change is real, and no credible scientist could ever make it otherwise. But what we see with our own eyes, in our low-lying islands, reveals a real present and growing threat to our own survival and security as a nation and as a State Member of the United Nations. We welcome the entry into force of the Paris Agreement, which stands as a truly robust, ambitious and long-term agreement. We must not allow our confidence in each other to be thrown off by road bumps in the short term.

We urge the ratification of and full participation in the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which is the legacy of the personal drive of the late Minister-in-Assistance to the President of the Marshall Islands, Mr. Mattlan Zackhras, who suddenly and tragically passed away last month. At the end of a long night of negotiations last year, the late Minister said that when the Amendment was adopted he would be proud to call on all Marshallese children because he knew that the Kigali Amendment could mean the difference between whether they would have a country — and a future — or not.

We strongly support the leadership of our Pacific island neighbour, Fiji, as the incoming President of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and we hope that in its care and with its leadership, the parties will adopt a strong set of rules. The Paris Agreement is only as strong as the political confidence that stands behind it. It is beyond imperative that, even in such early moments, committed nations start the challenging task of pushing ourselves to do even more. Even with our limited resources, the Marshall Islands is committed not only to implementing the Agreement, but also to exploring where our own action on energy can be strengthened. We must match our own ambitions with respect to emissions with stronger approaches and closer bilateral work.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands strongly agrees with the widespread call from the large and growing chorus of our fellow Member States for a more effective and efficient United Nations. It is beyond necessary. We support the Secretary-General taking action under his own authority to continue to initiate practical but powerful efforts to reduce duplication and improve delivery. It is a question not only of the use of public funds, including our own, but also of all of us improving our ability to achieve our full potential and making clear progress in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We cannot do it alone, and we cannot do itwith an international architect that, however good its intentions, has frequently lost the focus needed to help us make the connections between international forums and our local communities.

Before we engage in an impossible fight over resources, we must first examine the use of our resources already at hand. Our small in-country team often struggles with gaining access to seasoned international staff who can help us learn to navigate the system. The United Nations Development Programme Resident Coordinator for the Marshall Islands actually resides in another nation nearly 3,000 kilometres away. Our Resident Coordinator, who is fully dedicated to her mission, is also charged with being a coordinator for eight other remote island nations, one of which she is a resident of. We must re-examine the management decisions that led to such an outcome. Without stronger focus from the United Nations system, small island developing States could face serious barriers to their ability to implement the SDGs.

The Ocean Conference on the implementation of SDG 14, which took place last June, stands as a watershed moment of political will. But the good words uttered in those forums too often fall short when it comes to making global and regional decisions on oceans and fisheries. The Pacific small island developing States have sounded the alarm on the state of the world's oceans, which everyone has heard, but perhaps the alarm is not loud enough. As parties to the narrow agreement and beyond, we in the Pacific have the potential to effect a profound change in the role of the market in order to dramatically strengthen our own economic trajectory and boost global food security along the way. The United Nations system itself must do far more to help us focus on these transformative opportunities. And even if some of our partners are still slow to rise with us, the marketplace is already leading the way.

What the Pacific region is doing for tuna by ensuring our participation while promoting sustainable practices, we are also doing with the wider oceans. Increasingly our political partners will come to realize that our political support depends not just on the pressure they apply, but on how willing they are to follow our lead on sustainable oceans and fisheries issues. While it may be

our own Pacific economic and environmental survival at stake, it is also a great incentive for the rest of the world to know that two thirds of our planet's surface is no longer in peril.

No one is to be left behind when it comes to the SDGs or to complying with the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, we should consider that the exclusion of Taiwan from the United Nations and its related agencies has created major challenges for both the Government and the people of Taiwan in the pursuit of their fundamental right to participate. As is the case for my nation, Taiwan is an indispensable partner for the international community, including for our own receipt of humanitarian aid, medical assistance, disease prevention, environmental protection, anti-terrorism and transnational crime prevention. Practical approaches could allow us to work through existing controversies in order to achieve the global benefits of universal participation, including in the International Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the World Health Organization.

Security Council resolution 2758 (1971) has been misused to justify the people of Taiwan's exclusion from the United Nations. As a result, we are missing an important opportunity to cooperate with a proactive contributor to peace and the common global good. The United Nations, I believe, can and must do better.

In conclusion, there may be trying times, and the challenges of the world are severe, but it is in such adversity that true character is defined. And if an effective United Nations was ever truly needed, it is now. We must look outward to embrace the community of nations rather than look inward at our own self-interest to the detriment of others. Multilateral engagement must be our guiding light as we move towards a more effective and efficient United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mr. Abdallah (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Lajčák and his friendly country, the Slovak Republic, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We are confident that his vast experience and competence in the political realm will enable him to steer the work of this session to a successful conclusion. We are also pleased to express our appreciation for his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson of the Republic of Fiji, whose efforts during his presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session were commendable.

It is an equal pleasure to congratulate Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as Secretary-General, and we wish him every success in his noble tasks. We assure him of the Sultanate of Oman's readiness to cooperate with him and all the States Members of the United Nations to achieve the Organization's lofty goals and objectives, above all the maintenance of international peace and security.

Earlier civilizations flourished in parallel with humankind's belief in divine books, which created a set of values and principles for cooperation, coexistence, knowledge and scientific exchange, inter alia. We believe that religious and cultural heritage, along with the values of civilizations, enrich and enhance our understanding of peace. We should therefore not overlook such a heritage since it is an important means for disseminating the culture of peace and coexistence throughout the world.

In our foreign policy and international relations, we have adopted an approach that supports peace, coexistence, tolerance, dialogue and close cooperation among all nations and peoples. The Sultanate of Oman is also committed to the principles of righteousness, justice, equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and the peaceful settlement of disputes, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law. This perspective boosts confidence, enhances mutual respect for the sovereignty of States and promotes good-neighbourliness in a way that enables States to maintain security, stability and prosperity. Accordingly, we call upon all States to support peace efforts and to join hands to spread peace as a global culture at all levels.

Peace and dialogue are of vital importance for humankind. They are a collective responsibility. The United Nations is vested with the responsibility to lead the effort to foster them. However, the support of the international community is also needed to pursue national and international interests, but this cannot be achieved without giving the United Nations a strong role in protecting the world from conflicts and war.

Political and economic conflicts represent a failure of the international community to lend support for the

least developed countries, leading to many conflicts and problems, including transcontinental global migration, the spread of chaos, upheavals, troubles and instability in many parts of the world. The economic slowdown and the decrease in global trade have exacerbated these problems, especially in the developing countries, which have been negatively affected by World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements. The WTO has had limited ability in achieving its primary goal of building developing States' international trade capacities. We believe that the drive of some parties to gain a larger share of global markets or to implement isolationist and protectionist policies aggravates problems and increase tensions throughout the world.

Accordingly, we deem it highly important that the international community adopt a new vision that would lead to greater justice and expand common interests, while helping developing nations attain higher levels of sustainable development. This could be achieved if Member States adhered to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and avoided unilateral decisions or policies. The United Nations must once again take the lead in the path towards peace. Its agencies should play a more active role in the development process in order to achieve sustainable development.

From this rostrum, we call on all States to exert greater efforts and cooperate to help the United Nations restore its pivotal role in international relations. We also look towards a more vital role for the Secretary-General in the fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the United Nations. We support the Secretary-General in his efforts to strengthen and reactivate the role of the Organization in bringing international peace and security to the world.

We also call upon the international community to, in a spirit of responsibility and credibility, spread the culture of dialogue and understanding in order to peacefully settle disputes and end tensions in the world. We consider it essential to discover the causes of weakness in international policies and adopt a more effective approach to settling regional and international problems, including climate change and other issues that affect the security and stability in the world. On this basis, we invite the United Nations and the international community to shoulder their responsibilities and strive to achieve peace, prevent conflicts and wars, and settle differences through dialogue and other peaceful means. Accordingly, my country renews its readiness to work with the United Nations to build a new world that is secure and stable.

The world is witnessing new transformations in the scientific and technological realms that are affecting people's lives. There is also a steady growth in population. Therefore, we stress the need to adopt a new perspective to establish a global partnership that would benefit from such advanced technologies and scientific progress. The global breakthrough in technology achieved through the signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is an important gain for humankind. Several natural disasters recently have struck the world, which should convince all States that it is in their interest to adhere to the Paris Agreement.

The Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons indicated that the resolution adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference on a the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction remains in force until it achieves all its objectives. In that regard, my country supports all international efforts to draft a binding instrument that would cover the loopholes emerging from the Non-Proliferation Treaty. This highly important document would help the international community to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

My country denounces terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, regardless of its justifications. Based on our adherence to the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for the maintenance of international peace and security, we support all efforts aimed at confronting that scourge by taking the appropriate measures based on the relevant Arab, Islamic and international resolutions, treaties and agreements.

The world is facing real challenges that must be countered through a unified stance so as to respond to the aspirations of humankind. We therefore believe that working on the basis of the true meaning of partnership and common destiny among members of the international community is the most appropriate means to achieve such a goal. We wish the General Assembly every success at this session.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Denis Moses, Minister for Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Moses (Trinidad and Tobago): Each year, as a community of nations, we gather together to reaffirm the possibilities and potential arising from our resolve that finding solutions to the many challenges facing our planet can best be achieved through our collective action and shared dialogue and by striving for peace and a decent life for all peoples.

On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I am honoured and delighted to address the Assembly today. I extend heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We are confident that he will discharge his mandate with efficiency and impartiality for the benefit of all nations. He has the support of our delegation.

I also seize this opportunity to convey thanks and best wishes to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, former President of the General Assembly, for his hard work, commitment and leadership during the seventy-first session.

Once again, I extend congratulations to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his assumption of the position of Secretary-General. We wish to encourage and commend his direction and guidance in steering us forward.

From shifting weather patterns to global warming to sea-level rise, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale. In our region, we have witnessed the catastrophic effects of Hurricanes Irma, Jose and Maria, which have undoubtedly changed forever lives in several of our Caribbean countries, leaving some islands almost uninhabitable and resulting in many untimely deaths. The recent earthquake in Mexico and hurricanes in the United States ought to be counted within the realm of the recent global disasters.

Trinidad and Tobago, which is in the southernmost part of the Caribbean, was spared from the ravages of these hurricanes. It is with empathy that I extend, on behalf of the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, heartfelt condolences to our Caribbean family. We are forever mindful that, given our spirit of resilience, we will rebuild that which was lost. Trinidad and Tobago stands in solidarity with the affected countries and will continue to assist with relief efforts. However, rebuilding will require resources, as well as the cooperation and collaboration of the international community, because we simply cannot do it alone.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago joins with other Caribbean Community Governments in expressing our gratitude for the tremendous generosity and support provided in face of the region's most urgent need. Our thanks and appreciation also go out to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the region's first responder. However, CDEMA will need additional resources and funding to enable it to do even more to facilitate its immediate responses to natural disaster.

In the face of the recent natural catastrophes, how can one deny the scientific findings that climate change is real and that it is here and indeed upon us? The events of the past months in the Caribbean remind us all once more that small island developing States (SIDS) remain at the forefront of the impact of climate change. We cannot by any means continue with the same approach, as nature's fury holds no prejudice. Yet, in the light of their categorization as high-income countries under the outdated formula of gross domestic product per capita, Caribbean countries will not qualify for aid and development assistance in their time of need.

I join my Caribbean colleagues in calling for a multidimensional approach that takes into consideration real national needs and priorities and takes these extraordinary circumstances into account in order to provide access to development assistance, aid and debt relief as the Caribbean region collectively embarks together on the arduous task of recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

In order to achieve human and global sustainable development, we must treat unmitigated climate change and global temperature rise as a priority issue. Trinidad and Tobago is doing its part and remains committed to achieving the overarching objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Through our nationally determined contribution, Trinidad and Tobago has indicated its intention to reduce by December 2030 greenhouse-gas emissions in its public-transportation sector by 30 per cent, in comparison with 2013 levels.

Trinidad and Tobago has therefore framed its national development plan for the period 2016-2030, entitled Vision 2030, with a thematic focus of "Many hearts, many voices, one vision", in keeping with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this context, we have mapped our national development

goals in accordance with global priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Trinidad and Tobago and the United Nations signed the Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework in April. We acknowledge and thank the United Nations Development Programme for its assistance with these activities.

We are also pleased that the recently completed quadrennial comprehensive policy review has initiated a recalibration of the United Nations development system. This would better support developing countries, including SIDS, in the implementation of the programmes of action, including the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the 2030 Agenda. In alignment with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the Secretary-General's reform proposals, Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to ensuring that the United Nations development system adopts a more flexible and tailored approach to sustainable development assistance to assist countries in implementing the SDGs in a focused, coordinated, coherent and cost-effective manner.

Oceans cover three quarters of the Earth's surface and contain more than 95 per cent of the Earth's water. It is therefore indisputable that promoting the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources is of critical importance to sustainable development and the survival of all humankind. Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the progress achieved at the recently concluded Oceans Conference in June and the adoption of the historic call for action, as well as the commitments and actions to be taken by Member States to safeguard the health of the oceans through the implementation of SDG 14.

As a small island developing State, Trinidad and Tobago is highly vulnerable to the unprecedented rate of loss of marine biodiversity and the impacts of unsustainable practices on the marine environment. Consequently, we welcome the adoption of the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee established pursuant to resolution 69/292, on the development of a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Notably, this agreement will seek to address existing regulatory and legal gaps and ensure that the resources of our oceans are properly conserved and managed for the benefit of present and future generations

After two years of having the Preparatory Committee and about 10 years of negotiations, we believe that the time is long overdue for us to translate words into action. Trinidad and Tobago therefore looks forward to the convening of an intergovernmental conference in 2018 to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee on the elements and to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention.

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago protects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens and residents without discrimination based on race, origin, colour, religion or sex. Our Government accords high priority to achieving gender equality and the empowerment and advancement of women, who are pivotal to the achievement of the SDGs. In the words of the Secretary-General, "Women's rights are indeed human rights". One cannot overstate the importance of protecting the rights of women and ensuring their full participation on an equal basis with men.

In placing women at the forefront of our development, it should be noted that a Trinidad and Tobago national is one of two women who sit on the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, which comprises 20 members. With regard to the advancement of girls, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago recently passed the Miscellaneous Provisions (Marriage) Bill. This bill provides for outlawing child marriage in Trinidad and Tobago by raising the legal age of marriage to 18 years.

We are currently witnessing unprecedented levels of displacement in the world. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, approximately 65.5 million people have been forced to flee their homes. This amounts to nearly 22.5 million refugees. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago considers it important to develop ways to effectively manage migration and to take the necessary steps to enable the process of mainstreaming migration into development planning. We have therefore sought to make the necessary policy changes and to participate in projects and training in order to develop the necessary tools to mainstream migration into development planning.

Trinidad and Tobago was among the 122 States that voted in favour of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted on 7 July. The Treaty is particularly significant as it is the first multilateral legally binding instrument for nuclear disarmament to have been negotiated in 20 years. We look forward to

the convening of the high-level conference on nuclear disarmament by 2018. As a small island developing State, Trinidad and Tobago actively participated in the negotiations to prohibit nuclear weapons, as it is acutely aware of the destructive force of these weapons of mass destruction to, inter alia, human life, the environment, food security, infrastructure and economic growth.

In view of the continued prevalence and negative effects of illegal small arms and light weapons, including the issue of curbing such weapons and its ammunition, Trinidad and Tobago has played leading roles in a number of United Nations initiatives, such as the Arms Trade Treaty. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has contributed significantly to violence and instability in our region. The Arms Trade Treaty remains a key priority for Trinidad and Tobago as it seeks to regulate the illegal transfer of small arms and light weapons and ammunition.

I wish to reiterate to the Assembly the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's unequivocal commitment and unceasing call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. We remain optimistic that there will be a diplomatic solution to finding an end to this long-standing issue and that in good faith the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba, which significantly challenges its achievement of sustainable development, will be lifted soon.

We remain fully committed to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular to the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of trade and navigation. To this end, Trinidad and Tobago consistently supports subregional, regional and international efforts to promote constructive dialogue to bring about the cessation, sooner rather than later, of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Adherence to the rule of law is important to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which seeks to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and to ensure equal access to justice for all, as it is one of the pillars for promoting sustainable development.

Trinidad and Tobago, as a democratic society, adheres to the rule of law and the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. As such, we uphold the importance of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to promoting the rule of law, encouraging respect for human rights and achieving sustainable peace and development, in accordance with international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. As a country which has been credited as one of the forefathers of the ICC through the pioneering work of the late Arthur N. R. Robinson, former Prime Minister and President of Trinidad and Tobago, we remain resolute in our commitment to supporting the mandate of the ICC and its primary objective to help put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community, as well as to prevent such heinous crimes.

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago is particularly pleased with the President's choice of theme for the seventy-second session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". We believe that these concerns and issues are timely and necessary, especially as we are faced with increasing humanitarian challenges, threats to international peace and security, as well as the environment. In harmony with the global vision for multilateralism, we are committed to working together collectively to find enduring and sustainable solutions to global disparities, poverty, rising inequality, protracted conflicts and other challenges facing the world today. We must all do our part in this noble endeavour for the good of humankind.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Brahim Hisseine Taha, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Mahamat (Chad) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to extend my warm congratulations to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure him of our cooperation as he carries out his important mission. I would also like to express our appreciation to Mr. Peter Thomson, who led the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session with talent and discernment.

A decade ago in the Assembly, we deplored the emergence of various global crises, in particular financial ones and their adverse consequences on the world economy. Even today, developing countries, including my own, continue to suffer the consequences of the fall in the prices of our exports. This situation

negatively impacts the financing of our countries' development plans and strategies.

Humankind is also called upon to address new kinds of conflicts, such as those related to the challenges of terrorism, whose growing tentacles threaten our stability and further impoverish our economies. Equally important are the challenges related to climatic and environmental hazards, whose damaging consequences have been demonstrated in the recent landslide in Sierra Leone, the onslaught of the hurricanes in the Caribbean and the United States, and the earthquake in Mexico. We take the opportunity to express, from this rostrum, our solidarity with the bereaved Governments and families in the various affected countries.

Moreover, the ongoing phenomena of drought and desertification weaken our ecosystems, in particular the drying up of Lake Chad, causing massive population displacements and increasing pressure on the already limited resources of our countries. Its foreseeable disappearance would be a disaster for the 50 million human beings who live off the resources that Lake Chad provides. The letter and spirit of the theme of our current session and the commitments contained in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change should encourage the international community to save Lake Chad.

The economic and financial crisis affecting developing countries is undermining the efficient implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was tirelessly built on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals. Its adoption in 2015 gave rise to a great deal of hope because it is supposed to reverse the growth of poverty and promote development. However, with the persistence of the economic crisis, recurring threats to peace and security, the appearance of cyclical pandemics and the increase in the phenomenon of migration, we fear that these scourges will have a negative impact on the implementation of the Agenda.

In this difficult economic context, in early September in Paris Chad organized a round table to finance its national development plan. We take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed to the success of the round table. We hope that the pledges made on that occasion will be fulfilled.

At the political level, Chad intends to consolidate its institutions and strengthen the democratic process by renewing its institutional framework. With this in mind, next October, in line with the social project of President of the Republic of Chad, His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, Chad will convene a national forum on the institutional reforms charged with adapting the administrative and political structures to the country's new realities.

In addition to the difficult economic context, we in the subregion of the Sahel and the Sahara face particular security and humanitarian challenges. Indeed, the security situation in the countries of the Sahel and the Sahara continues to deteriorate as a result of the actions of terrorists, armed groups and traffickers of all stripes throughout the region. Recent attacks by terrorists in the capital of Burkina Faso and against the forces of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, as well as almost daily attacks in north-eastern Nigeria and the far north of Cameroon, show their determination to wage war against us to the end.

This resurgence of terrorist attacks challenges us and compels us to respond. This is why the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), following the example of the Multinational Joint Task Force, have established the G-5 Sahel Joint Force in the Lake Chad basin to fight the Da'esh-affiliated terrorist group Boko Haram.

In Mali, as in the Lake Chad basin, my country is committed and has made enormous human, material and financial sacrifices. This commitment — undertaken by the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, with the support of all Chadians — will endure because the collective security of the region and beyond is at stake. We must therefore consolidate our means of response if we want to counter this evil.

The multifaceted support of the international community, and in particular of our Organization, is indispensable. We recognize the primary responsibility of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Chad supports its peacekeeping operations throughout the world. Therefore, there is no question of our replacing the other forces engaged in Mali. The G-5 Sahel Joint Force is a complementary entity whose objective is to respond appropriately to the asymmetrical and unconventional warfare waged by terrorists and traffickers of all kinds. It is for this reason that we call upon the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, to grant a robust mandate to ensure that the Joint Force has sustainable resources to carry out its tasks.

The humanitarian situation is exacerbated by the particularly difficult security situation in our subregion, which is reflected in large-scale humanitarian crises, the massive displacement of people, famine, malnutrition and epidemics. For the past several decades, my country has welcomed more than 600,000 refugees and displaced persons fleeing conflicts in neighbouring countries, as well as returnees and internally displaced persons following the conflicts in Libya and the Central African Republic.

The current global situation and the persistence of hotbeds of tension in Chad are a source of serious concern for my country. While we recognize the sustained support of all our partners for the humanitarian problem in Chad, we call on the international community to make greater efforts to alleviate the suffering of the host populations, refugees and displaced persons.

One of the consequences of economic difficulties and unrest is the massive migration of young Africans to other places, particularly Europe. That is an unbearable phenomenon, considering the conditions of travel and residence in certain countries of transit and reception. That is why Chad, which is a transit country for migrants, is consulting with its various partners to address the root causes of the phenomenon and calls for massive investment in the development programmes in the countries of origin of migrants in order to put a stop to the loss of human resources.

The humanitarian situation can be resolved only if the outbreaks of conflict in the neighbouring countries of Chad are resolved. That is why the Chadian Government is very attentive to those conflicts and will continue to work with the international community to put an end to them. The violence in the Central African Republic continues. Chad welcomes the steps taken by President Touadera and his Government to assert the presence and authority of the State. He has urged all armed factions to commit themselves without delay to the peace process. We believe that the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is the opportunity that all parties to the conflict should seize in order to restore peace and security in that brotherly country.

Regarding the situation in Libya, Chad gives its full support to the United Nations and the African Union in the search for reconciliation among the various Libyan parties. But the solution to the crisis is in the hands of the Libyan political actors themselves, who have the historical responsibility to meet the expectations of their people.

South Sudan is like a wound on the body of our continent. Here too, the protagonists have a moral obligation to put an end to the intolerable suffering of the people. The international community should support the revitalization of the August 2015 agreement and the national dialogue.

At the international level, Chad welcomed the resumption of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba. There is no longer any obstacle to the normalization of relations between the two countries. My country believes, therefore, that maintaining the decades-long embargo against Cuba is unfair and counterproductive.

The Palestinian question remains a fundamental issue, with evident repercussions on other crises. Thus a just and acceptable solution must be found, one that includes the peaceful coexistence of the two States of Israel and Palestine. Therefore, Chad will support all efforts aimed at the recognition of the State of Palestine in all its aspects and on the basis of the 1967 borders.

The world has been facing an unacceptable crisis in recent weeks, that of the plight of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Burma, who are suffering a veritable ethnic-religious purge. Chad believes that the whole world must rise up in opposition and call on the Burmese Government to put an immediate end to that tragedy.

The Republic of Chad is deeply concerned about the threats to world peace caused by the nuclear tests conducted by North Korea. The leaders of that country must gauge the dramatic consequences that could come about as a result of that policy and should prioritize dialogue in order to assert their rights.

Finally, with regard to the proposals for United Nations reform, Chad reiterates the common position of Africa as determined by the African Group in New York, which emerged from the Ezulwini Consensus. We believe that the best way to reform the United Nations is to reform the Security Council and to grant a seat to Africa as a permanent member, thus enabling it to be involved in the decision-making process in world affairs.

Whether with regard to economic, climatic or environmental questions or domestic or international issues, Chad has always been guided by concern to

ensure the safety and welfare that the citizens of the world have the right to expect from their leaders. My country invites each of the States represented here today to implement the theme adopted this year by the Assembly in order to better our planet and the lives of its inhabitants.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Kamina Johnson Smith, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica.

Ms. Smith (Jamaica): I am delighted to extend the warm congratulations of Jamaica to the President for assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at the seventy-second session and to assure him of our support. We are particularly pleased to note his selection of a theme that underscores the fundamental importance of the transformative 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development, which is a plan for people, planet and prosperity.

I express, on behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, our deepest sympathies and prayers for the families and loved ones of victims of the recent hurricanes, which directly impacted our Caribbean brothers and sisters and those in the United States, as well as the families and loved ones of victims of recent earthquakes in Mexico, our dear friend from the region. I am deeply moved by the fact that following the passage of two massive hurricanes, thousands of people across the Caribbean are now forced into a life that is dramatically different from what it was just a few days ago. On behalf of our Caribbean brothers and sisters directly impacted by the hurricanes, we wish to thank those countries and organizations that have given without being asked, and to urge those who have the means to support these countries and their peoples in this time of urgent need.

For us in the Caribbean, climate change is not a philosophical concept or an academic debate. It is an existential issue. It is our reality, and it requires urgent and effective action. We are ever mindful of our responsibility to strengthen our resilience and expedite efforts towards adaptation and mitigation. Yet our ability to do so is greatly impacted by the new catastrophic events that cause social dislocation and severe misalignment of our economies. The limited resources that we have are dwarfed by the huge sums required to meet recovery and reconstruction costs. How do small States like ours, many already facing adverse debt dynamics, mobilize the financing required to build climate-resilient infrastructure? To do so, it is imperative that we identify both grant funds and concessionary financing that can support investment in resilient infrastructure over the long term. If not, we will continue to be caught in an inescapable cycle of devastation, recovery and reconstruction, until the next disaster strikes.

While it is essential to attend to the immediate humanitarian needs and reconstruction efforts, we must also urgently address our long-term Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs). I urge that in our collective efforts to implement the SDGs, we take account of the tremendous challenges faced by vulnerable countries completely knocked off course by external shocks. In such circumstances, the review and follow-up mechanisms associated with the time-bound commitments of the Agenda are rendered meaningless. Therefore, we call on the United Nations system to establish a mechanism to provide the requisite support and compensation to vulnerable countries affected by natural disasters, where their implementation of the 2030 Agenda and progress towards achieving the SDGs have been derailed as a result of such external shocks.

In recognition of our vulnerabilities as a small island developing State and the attendant complexities of our status as a middle-income country, Jamaica is collaborating with Chile on a new initiative called the Resilient 20. It seeks to create an alliance to promote resilience in countries prone to natural disasters, with a focus on middle-income countries.

We also support calls for the development of a climate change vulnerability index to provide a standardized method for characterizing vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change. That would enable international financial institutions and bilateral donors to better channel financial and technical resources towards countries most susceptible to loss and damage from climate change.

Jamaica ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in April, and regards that historic Agreement as critical to efforts to arrest the impact of climate change. Small island developing States were at the forefront of those negotiations and remain engaged in the Conference of the Parties process. It is an inescapable fact that we contribute the least to carbon emissions and yet we bear the brunt of the damage. In that context, we implore all Member States to abide by the commitments of the Agreement.

Climate change also poses risks to tourism, which is an industry that owes its competitiveness to the pristine nature of our environment. Sustainable and inclusive economic growth and job creation are priorities for Jamaica, and tourism plays a critical role in ensuring that they are achieved. That industry relies heavily on the long-term sustainable investments made by the private sector, both national and international.

For this International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, we have sought to increase such investments, create more jobs, promote culture and support community development, while safeguarding the natural environment. In November, in partnership with the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the World Bank Group, Jamaica looks forward to hosting the United Nations-WTO International Conference on Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism, which will be the first time such a conference is being held in the Caribbean.

Jamaica is deeply concerned about the heightened menace to international peace and security, arising particularly from the threat of nuclear weapons. We have a long-standing commitment to the goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world and are a State party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which declared the Caribbean and Latin America as the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area. At the universal level, therefore, we welcome the fact that we now have the first global Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as a critical step towards addressing some of those concerns. It is our hope that it will enter into force in short order and be duly observed universally.

As global citizens starkly aware of how closely our futures are intertwined, we condemn the recent nuclear and ballistic-missile tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which pose a grave threat to international peace and security. We urge North Korea to immediately and fully comply with its international obligations under all relevant Security Council resolutions and to resume dialogue on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

The challenges that currently impede global peace and security require that we identify and address the root causes of conflict. We therefore fully support the focus placed by the Secretary-General on sustaining peace across the continuum from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and long-term development.

We in Jamaica are working to provide our citizens with a safe and secure environment in which to live full and productive lives. Our strategy includes placing greater emphasis on safeguarding our porous borders, through which illicit firearms enter. Jamaica has benefited from the support of our international partners, and we invite continued collaboration in curbing this illicit trade. We therefore look forward to the third Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, to be convened in 2018. Furthermore, Jamaica will continue to play its part in supporting the universalization and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty.

People and their well-being are at the heart of our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We remain focused on the most vulnerable of our citizens to ensure that those furthest behind will benefit first from the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The alignment between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and our national development plan, Vision 2030, creates a framework within which we can identify and achieve our priorities, not least of which is to ensure the dignity of the individual.

What has become increasingly evident, however, is that securing the resources for the implementation of those development objectives remains critical at both the national and the international levels. In recognition of that fact, Jamaica has partnered with Canada to identify new and innovative means of financing development. Through the Group of Friends of SDG Financing, which our countries co-chair, we have been promoting the establishment of partnerships with the private sector, philanthropic organizations and academic institutions. We are exploring innovative financial mechanisms that can spur the investments needed to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

Issues related to global economic governance, debt sustainability and SDG financing take on even more significance for highly indebted middle-income countries like Jamaica, which have large public investment needs but limited fiscal space. Our reduced access to concessionary finance and official development assistance is a direct consequence of our middle-income designation. We contend that the use of gross domestic product per capita as the sole criterion to graduate countries such as ours from concessionary financing represents an inadequate and inaccurate measure of a country's true development status.

Accordingly, middle-income countries face the risk of having their hard-won socioeconomic gains reversed as a result of losing well-needed financial support, precisely at the time they need to consolidate and build on the gains they have made. We therefore commend and thank those, including the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Commonwealth Secretariat, that advocate for the application of a broader set of indicators that take account of the structural gaps in our countries. From a global perspective, it is important that the international economic and financial architecture be aligned with Agenda 2030 and take account of that very important distinction. Jamaica therefore urges that policymakers embed the SDGs into their design of international regulatory frameworks.

Jamaica looks forward to the convening later this year of the eleventh World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, which brings with it the potential for advancing the Doha Development Agenda. As a small island developing State with an open economy that is highly reliant on foreign trade, we are dependent on a vibrant and dynamic global trading environment. We must secure improved market opportunities beyond our shores.

We cannot, however, participate in the international economic and trading system without correspondent banking relations. Several international banks have withdrawn correspondent banking services from many small countries, including in the Caribbean, in an effort to de-risk their client portfolios in response to stringent regulatory penalties for compliance breaches. However, what is viewed by international banks as a simple balance-sheet issue has had unintended negative spill-over effects for countries in the Caribbean, with serious political and economic consequences. We call for urgent international attention to be given to that deepening crisis.

I now turn to the issue of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which exact a high socioeconomic and development cost on all countries, but disproportionately so in small island developing States. Jamaica agrees that an effective response to that global pandemic is best addressed through multi-stakeholder partnerships in a comprehensive whole-of-Government response. We are firmly on that path. Jamaica is addressing NCDs by promoting healthy lifestyles from birth, increasing awareness of NCDs and encouraging physical activity across the country. We are also strengthening our policy and regulatory frameworks to address obesity in childhood and adulthood and other risk factors.

Such efforts should be complemented by action taken at the global level. We therefore look forward to the 2018 high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases and reiterate the call for greater access by developing countries to the findings of modern research and technology.

Jamaica is committed to the empowerment of women and girls, and our young people. We have revitalized our national youth parliament and created a national youth advisory council to ensure that young people have a voice at policymaking levels in our country. We are strengthening our legislative and policy frameworks to address violence against women and girls and to foster economic opportunities. We will also protect our children from abuse by maintaining vigilance with respect to new and emerging threats, such as cyberbullying and sexual exploitation online.

Earlier this year, Jamaica became a party to The Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, and enacted legislation for its implementation. As we strengthen our national institutional framework to address trafficking in children, we also look forward to participating in next week's High-level Meeting on the Appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The movement of persons across borders is a natural phenomenon. Migrants are an asset both to their countries of destination and their countries of origin. Jamaica highly values the contribution that our diaspora makes to national development and to the development of their host countries. We are actively working on strategies to deepen our engagement.

Consistent with a renewed focus on placing people at the centre of sustainable development, we must not forget the plight of the refugees and persons displaced by conflict and natural disasters — occurrences not of their own making. Against this background, the ongoing deliberations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration take on even more significance as we move to the intergovernmental negotiations phase during this session of the General Assembly.

Jamaica's adherence to the principles of the United Nations is rooted in a belief in multilateralism and the benefits we derive from collaboration and cooperation. The most intractable disputes require us to engage

collectively in the quest for lasting and meaningful solutions. In this regard, we reiterate our call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. This unjust embargo has restricted the ability of a hard-working and self-reliant people to engage in legitimate trade, to travel and to undertake international financial transactions.

Turning to the Middle East, we continue to believe that the best solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis rests in a negotiated political settlement based on a just, lasting and comprehensive agreement that guarantees the security of Israel and provides for a Palestinian State within internationally recognized borders.

With respect to the situation concerning Western Sahara, we recall the appeal of the Security Council to all parties to show realism and a spirit of compromise to move the negotiations forward. Jamaica therefore supports the relaunch of negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, leading to the resumption of a process with the aim of reaching a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution.

Our collective efforts in all these political, economic and social areas require an effective and dynamic United Nations. Jamaica therefore supports reforms that improve coordination, enhance coherence and strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization. Reform measures must ensure that the United Nations remains connected to the people it seeks to serve and must be informed by the realities on the ground in programme countries. They should advance all three key pillars of the work of the United Nations: peace and security, development and the promotion of human rights. A renewed and revitalized United Nations reform effort will allow us to reap the full benefits of multilateralism.

I conclude by reaffirming Jamaica's unfailing belief in our ability as a community of nations, whose destiny and prosperity are intertwined, to make a difference in the life of every human being. I therefore encourage all of us to be bold and unrelenting in our quest to make this world a better place, leaving no one behind. Let us go forward in the conviction that we can achieve peace and prosperity for our peoples and protect our planet for the benefit of future generations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Asim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives.

Mr. Asim (Maldives): We stand today at a crossroads between old wars and new conflicts; between what we know and what we fear; between the needs of a changing planet and the demands of a growing population. We remain caught between human ambition and human limitations. In these times of change, we must turn once again to the principles that define the Organization — those that make us who we are and who we would like to become.

Rising from the darkness of war, the United Nations shone like a beacon of light. Dedicated to seeking peace, the Organization became the purpose for many of those fighting for freedom, fighting fear and fighting for the right to be. The United Nations was and is the best hope we have for humankind. The United Nations was built on the promise of peace and salvation. It is a place where every issue can be debated for a solution and where every nation has a voice, regardless of its size or might. That is why we believe that the theme for this session of the General Assembly — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is most appropriate. This is what makes up the core of the Organization and what defines our work.

Please allow me to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his assumption of the role of President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also welcome the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, to his first general debate and commend him for the dedication he has demonstrated throughout his first year in office.

The United Nations is what we all make of it. It is made up of us, the Member States, and its successes and its weaknesses are determined by how much we put into it. My country, the Maldives, envisions a United Nations that is fair and representative of its diverse membership, that takes into account the views and opinions of all, and that forms consensus based on compromise and dialogue. We envision a United Nations that commits and delivers.

Our vision for a stronger United Nations is founded on President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom's policy of strengthening national resilience — economic resilience, social resilience, political resilience and, indeed, environmental resilience. It is based on crafting meaningful global solutions, built on national policies and experiences, to the common problems of our times and for our common and shared destiny.

The world must become a safer planet for all. No man, no woman and certainly no child should suffer due to conflict, yet we know that this is not the case. Far too many people are dying in conflicts across the world. Far too many mothers are living in fear, unsure of the fate of their children, and far too many children are seeing their futures crumble in front of them.

In Palestine, another year ends without permanent peace or permanent hope. An independent, sovereign State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, established along the 1967 borders, is the only solution and the only way. Yet, many resolutions have been adopted without action and many peace processes have been abandoned without progress. The shameful occupation by Israel continues, without any consequences. Violence, economic deprivation, fear, hunger and hopelessness — these are what a child in Palestine is born into. Generations have now matured knowing nothing else. That must end.

In Syria, more than a quarter of a million people have lost their lives, with many millions displaced and many more millions made refugees. War crimes have been committed, chemical weapons used and inhumane treatment normalized. That suffering must end.

As hundreds of innocent people continue to flee violence, conflict and endless suffering — in their greatest numbers since the world wars — it has become imperative that we seek sustainable, long-term solutions that address the well-being and welfare of migrants and refugees. Incidents of hatred, Islamaphobia and xenophobia, which have become so frequent today, can only breed more violence, intolerance and hatred. Our policies of fences, force and fear must end.

In Myanmar, the situation of Rohingya Muslims, who are some of the most persecuted people in the world, presents another tragic case. Systemic violence, including massacres, the torching of homes, forced displacement and forced migration, are acts of ethnic cleansing that are alarming, to say the least. Those responsible for such barbaric actions must be brought to justice swiftly. Those acts of prejudice, violence and discrimination against Rohingya Muslims must end.

Instilling fear of the other is easy. Determining others to be worthless owing to their religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, Islamaphobia or any other reason is a short step away. When that happens, it is easy to ignore grave violations; it is easier to even encourage them. It is then, and only then, that we see, as we have seen, the worst of humankind. We cannot allow another wave of genocide to recur — not on our watch.

Chaos, vacuum and uncertainty have given the opportunity for Da'esh to start its own brand of terror, its own version of religion and its own brutal methods of fear. Combating terrorism and fighting violent extremism and radicalization are national priorities. We have enacted national legislation and formulated a comprehensive national policy in our fight against violent extremism. Last year, we also established a national centre for counter-terrorism. It is a top priority for the Maldives.

The Maldives is working with its bilateral and international partners, studying best practices and forging common consensuses. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General in achieving greater global coordination in the fight against terrorism. The establishment of the new United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, we hope, will inject more energy into the implementation of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. The Secretary-General will have our full support.

We must all do more. Today, we are in the midst of a war like no other. Our enemies have no single face, no single identity, no single country and no single strategy. The only things they have in common are their brutal methods and misplaced ideology. The fact that they kill more Muslims — the very people they allegedly fight to protect — proves their twisted reasoning. Such terrorism and such extremism must end.

In North Korea, the most recent tests of ballistic missiles, and with them the real threat of nuclear weapons and war, have alarmed us all. They are a clear violation of international law and an unnecessary act of provocation. There is every possibility now that they could lead us down the path of destruction. We condemn those actions and urge North Korea to return to dialogue, let multilateralism take its course and choose peace over war. These blatant attempts at aggression must end.

The world must become a more hopeful place for all — a place where people enjoy decent and meaningful lives. Adopting a proactive and constructive stand is our approach. Sustained and targeted investment is our policy. Looking to cultivate a culture of respect for human rights, at home and abroad, is our goal. We believe that we have been successful.

The Gender Equality Act has guaranteed in law what Maldivians have been practicing for decades — equality for women at home, at work, in decision-making and in our society. Policies aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership positions are showing results. Laws, policies and regulations have created a framework in which every man, every woman, every Maldivian can be a champion for gender equality. We need to do more, as all countries do, but we are proud of our considerable progress.

People with disabilities are supported through financial and material support. Our elderly population is getting the compassion and financial support we owe it, through well-targeted policies. Universal health care has been realized across the country, in all 188 islands. Easy access to a medical doctor, sea ambulances and a pharmacy on every island are ensured. The Maldives spends more than 9 per cent of its gross domestic product on health-related expenses, which is the highest in the region of South-East Asia. It is an investment that has propelled us on our development path. Lymphatic filaria, measles, malaria and polio are all diseases that have been eradicated in the Maldives.

Access to safe, habitable and affordable housing is recognized as a human right in the Constitution. Considerable progress has been made with several housing units built and awarded under public-housing schemes, despite the scarcity of land and the remoteness of islands. Achieving near-universal literacy and universal enrolment in schools has not stopped us. We are investing continually in improving the quality of our schools, our teachers, our curriculum and our approaches so as to ensure that no child is left behind.

We are also investing in our young people — the future of our nation. Caring for the physical, mental and social well-being of our young people — the largest portion of our population — is a cornerstone of the Government's policy. We are focused on creating an enabling environment in which they will thrive and shine, including through the promotion of unity, cultural values, national identity and national spirit through programmes such as Tharika, launched earlier this year.

The Maldives is a middle-income country, but like every country we want to achieve higher growth and even greater development. If that is to happen, large-scale investment is necessary. Investments are a means to support not only our economic development but also our social development. Large-scale projects will help to provide economies of scale and facilitate the expansion of key sectors of the economy, as well as create jobs and opportunities for our youth so that their creativity can be unleashed. Yet it has become increasingly difficult for middle-income countries like the Maldives to access concessional financing for development projects, thereby leaving them no other choice than to accept commercial interest rates and further increase their debt burdens. That will undoubtedly make the transition from the middle-income category to higher levels of development all the more challenging.

Our successes at home provide the basis for our solutions to the global problems that are facing our world. Our focus globally has been to ensure that we pay attention to the most vulnerable. That is why we believe that focusing on those who have no voice and are not usually represented and ensuring that their voices are heard should be the international community's collective focus, as it was ours during the six years we served on the Human Rights Council. Accordingly, while on the Council, we established the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the work of the Human Rights Council. Those two groups of countries are acutely underrepresented in Geneva. Our priority therefore was women, children and the disabled, and we initiated discussion on the link between climate change and its consequences on human rights. We worked hard to establish the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment — a major global milestone.

The world must be made a happier place to live in, and that can be achieved only through our collective will to approach our shared problems with concrete solutions. There is no greater global threat than that posed by climate change. In 1987, when the Maldives first spoke about sea-level rise, the science was still new and the threat relatively unknown. We persisted in our advocacy because we believed that the threat of climate change deserved and, indeed, warranted global attention. The Maldives hosted the first Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise in 1989. We helped establish the Alliance of Small Island States — one of the most influential groups with regard to climate change and sustainable development — which we have chaired since 2015. In 2008, the Maldives introduced

the first United Nations resolution on human rights and climate change (Human Rights Council resolution 7/23), which was the first time that a United Nations document acknowledged that link.

Today, the threat of climate change is very real. Unpredictable weather, more frequent and intense natural disasters and unprecedented temperatures are the norm rather than the exception. The unprecedented frequency and the intensity of the recent hurricanes that struck the Caribbean, the United States and the Pacific islands last year are all powerful signs that our planet has changed significantly. Island nations, including the Maldives, are the first to be devastated by such impacts, but we are not the only ones. Today, climate change is becoming a reality for the rest of the world whether or not we choose to believe it.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere sympathies to those who were recently affected by Hurricanes José, Irma and Maria. I assure them that we will not stop our advocacy with regard to the effects of climate change.

We have proposed many solutions. The full implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is our priority. The reduction of harmful emissions, transitioning to renewable sources of energy and investing in mitigation and adaptation are all crucial. We need to join together in meaningful and durable partnerships to find sustainable solutions. We need constructive engagement, leadership — such as we are seeing from China, Brazil, India, Canada, France, Germany and countless others — and a certain degree of openness to change on the part of all countries, including developing and developed ones.

At home, we are investing in renewable energy through the transition to a low-carbon economy. As the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, and in collaboration with the International Renewable Energy Agency, the Maldives launched the initiative for renewable island energy, which will facilitate support for small island States in their transition to renewable energy and in achieving energy efficiency. We are looking at innovative approaches to fulfil the development needs of our people that do not compromise the needs of our planet. We have lent our voice and shared our experience. We have requested support to make our economy and our country more resilient to the shocks and impacts caused by climate change.

Taking care of our ocean is intimately linked to taking meaningful action on climate change. The Maldives and other island nations are custodians of large expanses of ocean. Yet every person in this Hall, every community which they represent and every country they come from benefits from our oceans and depends on the health and wealth of our oceans and seas. Every other breath we take comes from the ocean. In the Maldives, the ocean is the backbone and the artery of its two main economic sectors: fishing and tourism. The ocean defines who the Maldivians are — traditional seafarers and members of fishing communities who rely on the produce that the ocean offers them.

We therefore welcomed and actively participated in the first United Nations Oceans Conference, held earlier this year, and despite the hardships, we have preserved our traditional method of pole-and-line fishing, which is the best regarded, cleanest, greenest and most sustainable method of fishing, as it is predicated on catching fish individually with practically no by-catch.

Since 2010, our entire exclusive economic zone, which comprises nearly 1 million square kilometres, has been declared a shark sanctuary. As the current Chair of the Save Our Sharks Coalition, we call on other countries to adopt that measure. Accordingly, an entire atoll is recognized by UNESCO as a biosphere reserve, while many other marine resources and areas are protected and preserved. In fact, there are many more uninhabited islands with marine protected areas than populated islands in the Maldives. That is why the total ban on the exploitation of ecologically significant marine creatures — such as turtles, whales, dolphins, rays, and whale sharks — is strictly enforced. At the same time, Maldivians are some of the most prolific consumers of fish and marine products, thereby demonstrating to the world that the sustainable use of marine resources is indeed possible.

We must not forget those who suffer the consequences of natural disasters. We are witnessing the total destruction and loss of life resulting from the earthquake in Mexico. As the international community, we must strive to do our very best for them and the many others throughout the world who are suffering from disasters, and focus on cultivating resilience through better rebuilding.

Climate change, sustainable development, and the protection of our ocean are not trends or ephemeral

infatuations. Inaction will cost us our progress, prosperity, the lives of our people and the future of all our nations. This is not the time to question what we already know. This is not the time to turn inwards or look the other way. There is no time to waste. It is time to act.

Two days ago, we celebrated 52 proud years as a Member of the United Nations. Throughout our membership over the past five decades, we have worked with a vision of a United Nations that protects people, providing them with a safe haven and access to their rights; a United Nations that preserves our planet, prioritizing the needs of our present generation without compromising those of the future; a United Nations that promotes peace, a world free from fear and full of bright tomorrows and an abundance of hope.

We have focused on providing meaningful, pragmatic and real solutions, based on sound national experience, for our common shared destiny. It is because we have a meaningful vision to promote that we continue to make every effort for the common cause of humankind. It is our firm belief in the power of multilateralism — the same faith that propelled us 52 years ago to seek membership of the United Nations, the very first foreign-policy decision of the independent Maldives — that pushes us to be effective members of the international community.

It is because we have never served before; it is because of the promise of equality of representation and our conviction that every nation, large or small, should have a voice and can make a difference; and it is because of our firm conviction that size does not determine destiny or value that, for the first time in our 52 years of membership of the United Nations, we are seeking a seat on the Security Council for the 2019-2020 term.

We stand tall and proud because we believe that we have much to offer: fresh perspectives, fresh ideas and new concepts that would bring renewed dynamism and new approaches to the United Nations. The Maldives deserves an equal chance to serve on that international organ. We are dedicated to the cause of peace in a sustainable world, and we are determined to leave a mark and make a difference.

The triumph of multilateralism, the pinnacle of our common vision, lies in our collective approach to solving the global challenges of our time. The Maldives stands ready to take that leap of faith, providing shared solutions for our shared, common destiny.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alain Aimé Nyamitwe, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Nyamitwe (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): I have the pleasure of conveying to the Assembly the most fraternal greetings of Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi. He would have liked to be present here, but pressing commitments back home prevented him from making the journey to New York.

My delegation wishes to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his outstanding election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I take this opportunity to pay a vibrant tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, a worthy son of Fiji, for a job well done.

As this is his first session of the General Assembly as head of our Organization, may I also express Burundi's appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his commitment to the values of peace, security and development.

Patience is a virtue that climate change does not recognize. The devastating effects it has fuelled have permeated virtually all conversations in this venue and ushered in this very session. The names of Irma and Maria, in the meteorological field at least, will forever connote total destruction. I therefore extend our most sincere condolences to the countries and regions of the Caribbean that have been severely affected by these hurricanes. We also express Burundi's solidarity with Mexico, stricken this week by an earthquake. We stand wholeheartedly with all these countries and their peoples.

The climatic disturbances of recent times are again sounding the alarm, urging all States to assume their collective duty to combat global warming and to implement without delay the commitments of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We believe that no State may shirk its responsibility to that end, whatever its size, shape or place on the map of the world. We must work together, for we are all in the same boat. If we wish to attain the objective of containing the average temperature rise on the planet below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels and pursue measures to limit temperature increases to 1.5°C vis-à-vis pre-industrial

levels, we need to act today because tomorrow will be too late.

In implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Burundi is continuing its path of social inclusion and shared economic growth. It cannot do otherwise, since these two aspects are key pillars of the development policy advocated through Vision 2025. To that end, our country counts on the cooperation of friendly States and other international partners. Unfortunately, the sanctions adopted by the European Union against Burundi are not contributing to the realization of these plans of great importance for the Burundian people, because they deprive the country of necessary resources. Thus, the attainment of the 2030 Agenda and the objectives of the African Union Agenda 2063 is compromised as a result of these sanctions.

We also believe that sanctions unilaterally imposed against developing States in general, and in Africa in particular, should be banned from the international system, since they perpetuate historical injustices and violate the sacrosanct principle of equal sovereignty. Like the African Union, Burundi therefore rejects and condemns the sanctions imposed on Burundi and other African countries.

In the field of migration, we must work together to find solutions to the root causes of population movements, made up mostly of young people, from countries of the South to the North. We need to ensure conditions of humane migration in order to protect migrants, who contribute to the well-being of the host communities through their multifaceted contributions to economic activity.

The apocalyptic scenes in the Mediterranean Sea strike at our consciences as human beings. The reasons for migration must be explained and we must all understand them if we are to find appropriate solutions. It is regrettable that migration is increasingly being met with a resurgence of racism, rejection of the other and, often, even acts of rare violence against migrants. Likewise, racist populism is becoming increasingly prominent and gradually undermining the paradigms on which certain so-called advanced societies have long rested.

Migration is sometimes the result of trafficking in human beings. The victims are doubly affected, since in addition to being wrenched from their countries of origin, they are mistreated in the host countries. That is unacceptable. Consequently, we advocate strengthened international cooperation in that area so as to build a more just world.

At the political level, our country reiterates, as it has done repeatedly, its position in consonance with the Charter of the United Nations. All States Members of the United Nations are sovereign Powers, and their sovereignty is equal. We call for reining in those States that continue in the twenty-first century to believe that they have the right to intervene in the internal affairs of other States, especially developing countries. We thank the Security Council, which, in the case of Burundi, has reaffirmed respect for its sovereignty in its various resolutions and presidential statements. We can never say it enough — Burundi believes that non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and respect for their territorial integrity and sovereignty constitute the pillars of a balanced international system under the Charter of the United Nations. Those principles are not negotiable. Today more than ever, Burundi stands ready to defend them at any price.

Recently, human rights have become another tool of domination. As a universal concept broadly elaborated upon in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international instruments, human rights have been increasingly exploited by several States that, if not mindful of their actions, will divert the Human Rights Council from the goals entrusted to it by the General Assembly. Some members have become accustomed to obtaining, through the Human Rights Council and other mechanisms established by the latter, resolutions aimed at undermining the peace and security of the States that they wish to harm. The recent report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Burundi (A/HRC/36/54) constitutes the ultimate proof of the Council's manipulation by certain small groups. Burundi reiterates that it is ready to cooperate with the relevant United Nations bodies, but on the condition that such cooperation be based on clear, fair and predictable foundations that, above all, respect the choices made by the Burundians themselves in the areas of governance and development.

With regard to the inter-Burundian dialogue and the external component, only a short time ago the Government of the Republic of Burundi received a visit from the facilitation team to follow up on consultations and resume discussions. Burundi's positions were made known to the facilitation team. We are waiting for the facilitation to call for the next meeting, at which the delegations will have their voices heard.

Burundi has asked its refugees to return. Our appeal, which we reiterate here and now, has also been made to neighbouring countries so as to facilitate their repatriation. Today, the repatriation movement continues apace, with the arrival of approximately 1,700 citizens who found refuge in Tanzania and 3,000 returning from Rwanda. They are joining tens of thousands of others who have returned over the past several months, as well as those who would like to return. We thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration for their cooperation in facilitating those return movements. We take this opportunity to ask that unscrupulous Human Rights Council officials end the unsavoury practice of encouraging refugees not to return.

At the same time, we call on the United Nations to continue to monitor the situation of Burundian refugees in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries, in full compliance with the relevant provisions of the Geneva Conventions. We deplore the shooting that took place a week ago in Kamanyola, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, resulting in the deaths of 38 Burundian refugees, at least one officer of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, and more than 120 wounded. Once again, we invite the refugees to return home.

Burundi has joined other States in combating terrorism, with 5,400 troops in Somalia within the framework of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Burundi has been the second-largest troop-contributing country in Somalia for the past 10 years. Burundi is concerned about the continued reduction in support for AMISOM, especially at a time when an important campaign has been planned. The successes of the past several years cannot be sacrificed to self-interest. That would run contrary to the oath taken by all partners, which have repeatedly stated that terrorism is a global threat.

In pursuing its contribution to world peace and security, Burundi participates in peacekeeping operations in the brotherly country of the Central African Republic, and its police units are deployed in Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti. Burundi believes that the efforts and sacrifices made by others must be rightly acknowledged in all cases.

If there is one recurring topic of debate in this Hall, it is that of the reform of the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council. Burundi supports all approaches aimed at fostering a constructive interaction, open to all, between the States Members of our Organization, on the one hand, and the Secretary-General on the other. Burundi supports the structural reform of the United Nations pursuant to the initiative taken at the high-level event on 18 September. It is necessary to consider the necessary reforms with the goal of improving the functioning of organs including the Security Council and the General Assembly. That will bring the bodies concerned in line with the realities of the twenty-first century.

It is clear that by dint of pouring new wine into old wineskins, we wind up bursting the latter. We must be firm in our conviction that, 72 years after its establishment, the United Nations is in need of a complete face-lift. Concerning reform of the Security Council in particular, Burundi supports the shared African stance known as the Ezulwini Consensus. It is high time that we correct the injustices of the past and allow the equitable participation of all continents in the governance of international peace and security.

With regard to international issues, Burundi welcomes the return of the Kingdom of Morocco to the fold of the African Union so that we can build a strong and prosperous continent together. With regard to Western Sahara, Burundi supports the decisions and resolutions adopted by the relevant United Nations bodies.

We call for the unconditional lifting of the economic blockade against Cuba without delay. The Cuban people have suffered under unjust measures that were adopted during the Cold War era for primarily ideological reasons and can no longer be justified today.

Similarly, in the case of Venezuela, we call on the international community to take measures that promote national cohesion and not social disruption.

Lastly, I wish the General Assembly every success at this session.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.